

**Council on Postsecondary Education**  
**July 30, 2001**

**Review of Research Challenge Trust Fund Programs and  
Programs of Distinction**

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Guidelines for the Research Challenge Trust Fund and the Regional University Excellence Trust Fund require the council to assess the academic and financial performance of the programs supported by these trust funds at least once every two years. The council received the initial report at its January 2000 meeting. The council staff reviewed the programs again in spring 2001.

The Research Challenge Trust Fund programs are:

- University of Kentucky: gerontology and aging; advanced medical research; clinical pharmaceutical sciences research and graduate training; molecular mechanisms of toxicity; computer science and electrical engineering; materials synthesis; plant sciences; research, graduate education, and technology transfer; interdisciplinary biological chemistry; management and economics; psychology of substance abuse and prevention; expanding frontiers of client server library system; geography; and graduate student support.
- University of Louisville: early childhood education; entrepreneurship; logistics and distribution; and molecular medicine and biotechnology/health related research.

The Regional University Excellence Trust Fund programs of distinction are:

- Eastern Kentucky University: justice and safety.
- Kentucky State University: aquaculture.
- Morehead State University: institute for regional analysis and public policy.
- Murray State University: telecommunications systems management.
- Northern Kentucky University: center for integrative natural science and mathematics.
- Western Kentucky University: applied research and technology and media for the twenty-first century.

## **Background**

The *Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997* (House Bill 1) created the Regional University Excellence Trust Fund and the Research Challenge Trust Fund. The RUETF aims to support at least one nationally recognized program of distinction at each of the comprehensive universities. The RCTF supports nationally recognized research programs at each of the research universities. The RCTF and RUETF trust funds contain \$12 million of the \$932 million 2000-01 state appropriation to postsecondary institutions.

## **Review Process**

The council staff sent letters to the director of each comprehensive university's Program of Distinction and the vice presidents for research at UofL and UK in February 2001 requesting program reports and data. Campus visits occurred during March, April, and May 2001. The council staff met with deans, faculty, students, financial officers, and representatives of the provosts' office. Follow-up letters summarizing observations were sent in June. The staff convened a meeting of the POD directors June 21 to discuss common concerns and to explore opportunities for collaboration.

## **Staff Analysis**

All institutions are progressing satisfactorily toward the preliminary goals outlined in the RCTF and POD proposals approved by the council. The council staff will continue to monitor each program through the institutions' annual reports and will undertake future campus site visits when warranted. Institutions will bring exhibits showcasing the programs to the council's trusteeship conference in September.

**RCTF Programs.** The RCTF programs are advancing rapidly in their areas of specialty and are beginning to contribute to Kentucky's economy. Exceptional faculty have been recruited to the Commonwealth through the RCTF and are furthering the institutions' national reputations. The RCTF programs are generating enthusiasm on campus and statewide. Each program seeks national prominence and educational, health, and economic benefits for Kentucky's people. The programs are multidisciplinary, and the institutions are aware that each program should provide direct benefit to the Commonwealth.

RCTF programs at UK and UofL are supporting and tracking their contributions to economic development. UK's Advanced Science and Technology Commercialization Center assists and tracks commercial developments of discoveries made by UK's scientists and engineers. Bio Incubator, an information technology and biomedical partnership between UofL, Jewish Hospital, and Norton's Hospital, supports and records commercial development of their research results.

**POD Programs.** The comprehensive universities are establishing nationally recognized programs that benefit students, faculty, and communities. POD funds have created new teaching and research opportunities for faculty and purchased equipment that meets industry standards. These efforts have aided in recruiting new faculty and students. Students are enthusiastic about working in labs with researchers. The PODs are reaching out to local P-12 institutions, collaborating with other departments on their own campuses and with other universities, and creating partnerships with their regional communities. POD faculty are developing online courses and forming distance-learning partnerships with the KYVU.

Previous POD reviews identified concerns in student enrollment, promotion to the public, and administrative structure. Recruitment still needs to be a high priority for all programs, especially for minority and female students who are traditionally underrepresented in science, math, and

engineering. More aggressive public promotion of the programs is needed. The programs have drawn the attention of their academic peers nationally, but program directors need to publicize their work in their own institutions and in the Commonwealth. Administrative policies remain a concern. Tenure policies for faculty hired with POD funds should be developed or clarified for interdisciplinary PODs so POD work is properly rewarded. Commercialization and royalty distribution policies should be adopted, and faculty on each campus must be made most aware of the commercial potential of their research.

### **Trust Fund Match**

The council staff reviewed financial information for FY 2000 to determine whether institutions had matched trust fund support for programs on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The match was achieved. Following is a schedule of the FY2001 and FY2002 appropriations for the RCTF and the POD programs which the institutions must match.

<b>Institution</b>	<b>FY 2001</b>	<b>FY 2002</b>
Eastern Kentucky University	\$1,540,100	\$1,577,100
Kentucky State University	475,100	486,500
Morehead State University	903,200	924,900
Murray State University	1,049,600	1,074,800
Northern Kentucky University	756,700	774,900
University of Kentucky	4,096,000	4,194,300
University of Louisville	2,048,000	2,097,100
Western Kentucky University	1,419,200	1,453,200